

NOAA's MARINE PROTECTED AREAS CENTER
SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER
EXECUTIVE ORDER 13158

On May 26, 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order #13158 on Marine Protected Areas. This historic milestone in ocean conservation directs the federal government to significantly *strengthen and expand the national system of MPAs*, working closely with state, territorial, local, and tribal trustees and other stakeholders. To that end, NOAA has been assigned lead responsibility for a fundamental scientific component of this initiative: the creation and management of the national Marine Protected Areas Center (MPAC). Following is a brief summary of the purpose and primary duties of the MPAC, as specified in the Executive Order.

“The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall establish a Marine Protected Area Center to carry out, in cooperation with the Department of the Interior, the requirements of subsection 4(a) of this order, coordinate the website established pursuant to subsection 4(d) of this order, and partner with governmental and nongovernmental entities to conduct necessary research, analysis, and exploration. The goal of the MPA Center shall be, in cooperation with the Department of the Interior, *to develop a framework for a national system of MPAs, and to provide Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local governments with the information, technologies, and strategies to support the system.*”

Executive Order #13158
May 26, 2000

Specific Themes for the MPA Center:

In addition to this general guidance, the Executive Order lists a number of specific information needs that the MPAC is directed to fill through a combination of targeted research, assessment and policy analysis:

- *science-based identification and prioritization* of natural and cultural resources for additional protection;
- integrated assessments of *ecological linkages among MPAs*, including ecological Reserves in which consumptive uses of resources are prohibited, to provide synergistic benefits;
- a biological assessment of *the minimum area where consumptive uses would be prohibited* that is necessary to preserve representative habitats in different geographic areas of the marine environment;

- an assessment of threats and *gaps in levels of protection* currently afforded to natural and cultural resources, as appropriate;
- practical, science-based criteria and protocols for *monitoring and evaluating* the effectiveness of MPAs;
- identification of *emerging threats and user conflicts* affecting MPAs and appropriate, practical, and equitable management solutions, including effective enforcement strategies, to eliminate or reduce such threats and conflicts;
- assessment of the *economic effects* of the preferred management solutions;
- identification of opportunities to improve linkages with, and technical assistance to, *international* marine protected area programs.

Next Steps:

NOAA is currently evaluating a number of options for the structure, organization, function and geographic location of the MPA Center. We anticipate reporting the results of this process to the President by October 1, 2000.

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